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DESKBY 281230Z

DUBLIN 281106Z JUN 79

BS TO PM

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 130 OF 28 JUNE

AND TO IMMEDIATE NIO LONDON NIO BELFAST

MY TELECON WITH NEWINGTON, RID, TODAY: VISIT OF SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND.

1. MR ATKINS, ACCOMPANIED BY OFFICIALS, MET THE IRISH FOREIGN MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR JUSTICE IN DUBLIN TODAY. THE MEETING WAS DELAYED BY TWO HOURS BECAUSE MR O'KENNEDY WAS DETAINED IN BRUSSELS. THE THREE MINISTERS MET OVER LUNCH AND DISCUSSIONS WITH OFFICIALS TOOK PLACE AFTER THAT. IN ALL, THE TALKS LASTED FOR TWO AND A HALF HOURS.

2. THE ATMOSPHERE WAS, TO MY MIND, VERY GOOD AND I THINK THINGS HAVE GOT OFF TO A GOOD START. HERE, ONE ALWAYS HAS, HOWEVER, TO ADD A CAUTIONARY NOTE THAT SOMETHING COULD BE SAID TO THE MEDIA OR IN REPLY TO QUESTIONS IN THE DAIL WHICH MIGHT UPSET THINGS.

3. THE USUAL THREE TOPICS, POLITICAL, SECURITY AND ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION WERE DISCUSSED, THE LAST VERY BRIEFLY INDEED BECAUSE OF LACK OF TIME.

4. FROM MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S AIMS AT THIS MEETINGS, HE WAS ABLE TO PUT ACROSS ALL THE POINTS HE WISHED TO MAKE DURING BOTH THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY DISCUSSIONS. THIS TELEGRAM IS NOT A RECORD OF THE TALKS. SOME OF THE MAIN POINTS TO EMERGE ARE OUTLINED BELOW:-

POLITICAL

5. MR ATKINS SAID THE PARTIES IN THE NORTH WERE BACKED INTO CORNERS. HE WISHED TO COAX THEM OUT. HE EMPHASISED THAT WHAT FRIGHTENED THE MAJORITY IN THE NORTH WAS THAT THEY COULD BECOME THE MINORITY SEMICOLON EVERY TIME PEOPLE SPOKE ABOUT THE UNITY OF IRELAND THE UNIONIST TOOK TWO PAGES BACK. HE WENT ON TO DEVELOP THIS THEME AND MENTIONED THAT THE USE OF THE PHRASE QUOTE POWER SHARING UNQUOTE WAS QUOTE FATAL UNQUOTE IN THE NORTHERN CONTEXT. THE PATH WOULD BE LESS STONEY IF PRESSURE WERE NOT PUT ON FROM THE OUTSIDE. TO TAKE AN INITIATIVE TOO SOON WOULD BE THE GREATEST MISTAKE.

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6. MR O'KENNEDY IN REPLY SAID THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE RULE HAD HAD A MODERATING INFLUENCE. THE IRISH DID NOT EXPECT AN IMMEDIATE INITIATIVE ON THE NORTH. HE CONSIDERED THAT WHAT THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAD SAID ABOUT HIS PRESENT ACTIVITIES WAS PART OF A REASONED LONG-TERM APPROACH AND THUS WAS IN EFFECT AN INITIATIVE. HE STRESSED THAT THE FACT THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WOULD BE IN POWER FOR FIVE YEARS WITH A SECURE MAJORITY WAS VERY IMPORTANT. THE IRISH WERE PREPARED TO SUPPORT THE IDEA, AS THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAD EXPRESSED IT, OF SEEKING ANY WAY IN WHICH THE DIFFERING VIEWS OF THE PEOPLE IN THE NORTH COULD BE ACCOMMODATED IN AN ARRANGEMENT.

7. HE WENT ON TO MAKE AN INTERESTING COMMENT ON IRISH UNITY WHEN HE SAID THAT THAT WAS A LONG-TERM POLICY POSITION AND THAT THE IRISH DELIBERATELY AVOIDED OCCASIONS, WHEN THAT WAS POSSIBLE, TO REPEAT THEIR POSITION ON A UNITED IRELAND. THEY HAD, OF COURSE, TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ON THE SUBJECT. HE HOPED FOR THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE MOVES TOWARDS RECONCILIATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH.

SECURITY

8. THE SECRETARY OF STATE SAID THAT HE STARTED FROM THE POSITION THAT BOTH GOVERNMENTS WERE TOTALLY DEDICATED TO THE ERADICATION OF TERRORISM AND THAT WE SHOULD BOTH BE DOING BETTER IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE TERRORISTS.

9. MR COLLINS AGREED WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S ANALYSIS OF THE PRESENT PROFESSIONALISM OF THE PIRA AND AGREED THAT DESPITE QUOTE OUR BEST EFFORTS UNQUOTE WE WERE NOT GETTING ON TOP OF THEM. HE ADMITTED THAT WHILE THE IRISH SECURITY FORCES WERE QUITE SUCCESSFUL IN DONEGAL, THEY WERE LESS SO IN SOUTH ARMAGH AND MONAGHAN, OBSERVING (AS THE IRISH HAVE FREQUENTLY IN THE PAST) THAT THINGS MIGHT BE EASIER IF THERE WERE MORE BRITISH ARMY INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTH ARMAGH. HE THEN WENT ON TO REVEAL THE USUAL IRISH HYPER-SENSITIVITY TOWARDS CRITICISM, IMPLIED OR OTHERWISE, BY REFERRING TO PRESS REPORTS SUGGESTING THAT THE IRISH SECURITY FORCES WERE NOT PULLING THEIR WEIGHT AND TO THE LEAKED BRITISH ARMY DOCUMENT.

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10. THE SECRETARY OF STATE WELCOMED THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW IRISH TASK FORCE ON THE BORDER AND MADE THE POINT THREE TIMES THAT HE ASSUMED IT WOULD BE A QUOTE CONTINUING OPERATION UNQUOTE. WHILE MR COLLINS DID NOT SPECIFICALLY SAY THAT THAT WAS THE CASE HE DID NOT IN ANY WAY SUGGEST THAT IT WAS NOT. DURING THIS PART OF THE DISCUSSION, HE REVERTED TO THE IDEA THAT MORE BRITISH ARMY INVOLVEMENT WAS NEEDED, ADMITTING AT THE SAME TIME THAT THE IRISH ARMY WAS NOT BEING FIRED AT AS WAS THE CASE WITH OUR SECURITY FORCES.

11. MR ATKINS WELCOMED ALSO THE INFORMATION THAT THE NUMBERS OF GARDAI IN EACH COUNTY WERE BEING INCREASED AND THAT MORE ATTENTION WAS BEING PAID TO THE COLLECTION OF INTELLIGENCE.

12. ON THE QUESTION OF RUC PRESENCE DURING INTERROGATION IN THE REPUBLIC, MR COLLINS REPLIED THAT IF THE ANSWER WERE NO, THE IRISH WERE QUITE PREPARED TO HAVE SOMEONE QUOTE CLOSE BY UNQUOTE BUT NOT INVOLVED IN THE QUESTIONING. THERE IS NOTHING NEW ABOUT THIS EXCEPT FOR THE USE OF THE WORD QUOTE IF UNQUOTE AND THE FACT THAT HE MUTTERED THAT QUOTE WE COULD TEASE IT OUT UNQUOTE. MR COLLINS EMPHASISED THAT A NEGATIVE REPLY SHOULD IN NO WAY BE TAKEN AS IMPLYING LACK OF CO-OPERATION.

13. MR COLLINS' ONLY COMMENT ON THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S QUESTION WHETHER THE IRISH GOVERNMENT MIGHT WISH TO FOLLOW OUR EXAMPLE IN PROSCRIBING THE INLA, WAS TO SAY QUOTE VERY INTERESTING UNQUOTE.

ECONOMIC

14. MR O'KENNEDY SUGGESTED THAT WE SHOULD RENEW OUR COMMITMENT TO CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION AND THOUGHT WE SHOULD EXTEND OUR HORIZONS AND LOOK AT WAYS AND MEANS OF JOINT PROMOTIONS BETWEEN THE NORTH AND SOUTH ON SUCH THINGS AS TOURISM AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT.

15. THE MEETING ENDED ON A VERY CORDIAL NOTE WHEN MR O'KENNEDY SAID THAT THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAD THE GOOD WISHES AND SUPPORT OF THE IRISH WHO KNEW THAT HE WOULD DO HIS BEST TO CREATE THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION. MR COLLINS ADDED THAT HE MOST SINCERELY HOPED THAT MR ATKINS WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL IN HIS EFFORTS.

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